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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001834

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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [KCOR](#) [KCRIM](#) [SNAR](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: EFCC CHAIR ON ADMINISTRATION'S ANTI-CORRUPTION
CAMPAIGN

REF: A. ABUJA 1741

[1](#)B. ABUJA 1255

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs Robert Gribbin for reasons 1.4. (b & d)

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[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. EFCC Chairman Ribadu told Charge on August 16 that Yar'Adua is committed to investigating corrupt former officials to send a message that no one is above the law. Despite GON support, however, Ribadu maintains that the EFCC is dependent on international donors to fulfill basic needs of the service. Ribadu described recent moves by the Attorney General to reign in the powers of the EFCC as "absurd," alleging that former Governor Ibori, now under investigation in the U.K. and Nigeria, is behind the plot. Yar'Adua's backing down on the AG's request for greater oversight of the EFCC could be a sign of his commitment to an anti-corruption agenda; however, some fear it is simply a product of a decision-making style that relies most heavily on whomever he has spoken to last. Ribadu also offered his opinion on acting Inspector General of Police Okiro, making it clear there is no love lost between the two. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Charge paid a courtesy call on Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Chairman Malam Nuhu Ribadu on August 16 to discuss the Yar'Adua administration's anti-corruption efforts and recent moves by the Attorney General to reign in the powers of the EFCC (Ref. A). Ribadu described the GON's anti-corruption efforts since the establishment of the EFCC in 2003 as a "quiet revolution." The Yar'Adua government, he contended, is committed to investigating corrupt former government officials as a form of deterrent to those currently in office and to send a message that no one is above the law. He said Yar'Adua had promised not to interfere in EFCC investigations.

FORMER GOVERNOR IBORI SCHEMES AGAINST EFCC

[1](#)3. (C) Ribadu called the recent move by the Attorney General (AG) to gain control over EFCC cases and prosecutions (Ref. A) "absurd," alleging that the AG "allowed himself to be used." Ribadu maintained that the plot was hatched by former Governor James Ibori (Delta State) in response to the EFCC's role in an investigation by London Metropolitan Police which resulting in the freezing of \$35 million of Ibori's assets. (COMMENT: Internet reporting site Sahara Reporters ran a story on August 11 which correlates fact-for-fact with Ribadu's statements to the Charge. The "security source" cited by Sahara Reporters may, in fact, be Ribadu himself.

END COMMENT.) According to Ribadu, Ibori reached out to several other former governors currently under investigation and paid the Chief Publisher of "This Day" newspaper, Nduka Obaigbena, to lobby Yar'Adua for the change. The current AG and Minister of Justice, Michael Aondoakar, an attorney who has represented former Vice President Atiku and several of the former governors now battling corruption charges, was reportedly glad to participate in the plan.

14. (C) Obaigbena and the AG then reportedly reached out to the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), led by Olisa Agbakoba, to turn the issue into a question of constitutional mandate. The NBA allegedly drafted the letter from the AG requesting that the President give the AG authority over the investigations and prosecutions of the EFCC and other anti-corruption bodies. The letter from the AG to Yar'Adua was timed to coincide with Ribadu's trip to his home in Yola State. Upon hearing the news, Ribadu says he returned to Abuja and met with Yar'Adua, making his case for continued independence. Yar'Adua overturned his previous decision, and public statements were made backtracking on the announced placing of EFCC activities under the AG.

EFCC DEPENDENT ON INTERNATIONAL DONORS

15. (SBU) Ribadu thanked the USG for support of the Commission, noting that officers have attended approximately 30 training sessions in the U.S. since the Commission was established. He stressed, however, that the EFCC remains dependent on outside support to fulfill fundamental needs of the service. He hopes U.S. support will continue in the future, and noted that international donor support has made possible the establishment of the EFCC's regional offices.

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Ribadu outlined EFCC plans for building cross-cutting national databases for information sharing within the police and security services, as well as an EFCC forensics lab currently under construction.

YAR'ADUA'S COMMITMENT - RHETORIC OR ACTION?

16. (C) COMMENT. It appears based on the rhetoric emanating from the President's office, as well as what we're hearing from contacts both within and outside the GON, that Yar'Adua may well be strongly committed to improving the fight against corruption. What is less clear, however, is whether he has the strength of character to take on the big boys of corrupt Nigerian politics. That Yar'Adua initially agreed to the EFCC submission and then later changed his mind, could be indicative of his willingness to hear opposition and make a stand. On the other hand, it could just as easily be a sign of what we have heard described as "serial decision making" -- meaning that he is influenced most by whomever has spoken to him last. That the EFCC will remain in charge of their own investigations and prosecutions is a positive outcome, but the motivations behind Yar'Adua's decisions are just as important as the outcome. Whether he has the personal strength to carry out his plans in the face of opposition will be the true test of his administration.

17. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED. On the way out, when INL Officer asked Ribadu if he thought Acting Inspector General of Police (IGP) Mike Okiro would be confirmed, the EFCC boss replied emphatically, "I hope not!" Okiro, it will be remembered, almost immediately upon taking office accused his predecessor, Sunday Ehindero, of corruption and malfeasance (Ref. B). Although the scandal has dissipated and Ehindero ostensibly exonerated, Ribadu is an Ehindero protege, and the EFCC was uncharacteristically silent while Ehindero was being investigated. The two served together when Ehindero was Lagos State Police Commissioner in the mid-1990s and Ribadu allegedly was the former IGP's pick to succeed him. Rumors abound that Yar'Adua may retire Okiro and the entire Nigerian police force leadership and Ribadu may still covet the IGP position. Even if not, there clearly is no love lost between

him and his mentor's antagonist. END COMMENT.
GRIBBIN